

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
**Office of Archives and History**  
**Department of Cultural Resources**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Sunbury High School**

Sunbury, Gates County, GA0318, Listed May 12, 2009

Nomination by Michelle Michael

Photographs by Michelle Michael, August 2006



Façade view



Gymnasium

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sunbury High School

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 101 NC HWY 32 N not for publication N/A  
city or town Sunbury vicinity N/A  
state North Carolina code NC county Gates code 073 zip code 27979

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination  
\_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of  
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
\_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional  
comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sunbury High School  
Name of Property

Gates County, North Carolina  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private  
☒ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION - School

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
REVIVALS- Colonial Revival

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Brick</u>
roof	<u>Slate</u>
walls	<u>Brick</u>
	<u>Stucco</u>
other	<u>Wood</u>
	<u>Vinyl</u>

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☒ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1908-1959

### Significant Dates

1908, 1937, ca. 1940, ca. 1950

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Unknown

### Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Sunbury High School  
Name of Property

Gates County, North Carolina  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** Approx. 7 +/-

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 18 3566120 4034500  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Michelle Michael, Architectural Historian

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date January 2, 2009

street & number 1801 Queen Street telephone 910-257-3047

city or town Fayetteville state NC zip code 28303

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## Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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## Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Gates County (County Manager)

street & number 202 Court Street, PO Box 148 telephone 252-357-1240

city or town Gatesville state NC zip code 27938

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain

a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

**Setting:**

The 1937 Sunbury High School is on the east side of North Carolina Highway 32 just north of the intersection with NC Highway 158, the main intersection in Sunbury, Gates County, North Carolina. The development around the school is a mix of commercial and residential uses which is not uncommon in northeastern North Carolina's crossroads communities. The school building is set back on its lot facing west and is accessed by a circular drive in front. Stands of longleaf and loblolly pine line the driveway. The school is by far the largest and most impressive building in the immediate area. A 1960s classroom addition is connected behind the school to the east. The gymnasium building still stands to the south, the old teacherage and agricultural building are located to the north.

**Exterior:**

Sunbury High School is an impressive brick Colonial Revival-style school building with a cast-stone belt course that wraps the building. It has two stories and contains a side-gabled main block flanked by two, long, slightly lower two-story, side-gabled wings which give the building a telescoping form. The roof is sheathed with slate shingles. The seven-bay main block is marked by a classical central entrance with entablature, fluted pilasters, and recessed double-leaf entrance surmounted by a multi-light transom. A wood sign with block letters spelling, "Sunbury Elementary School", is hung between the entrance and the second story windows above. The window above the entrance is a double-hung twelve-over-twelve wood sash window with classical wood surround consisting of fluted pilasters and flat entablature with keystone capped by a molded shelf. All of the other windows on the façade are double-hung twelve-over-twelve wood sash windows capped by brick flat arches and keystones but no other surround. All of the window sills and keystones are cast stone to match the belt course. A wide molded wood cornice is evident on the main block. Both wings are eight bays with a narrow cornice and are symmetrical in form and massing. The windows on the first floor are currently boarded for security but they are intact behind the plywood.

The identical north and south elevations are composed of a gabled end with a central, round arched keystone and springers opening on the first floor. The double-leaf, half-glazed entrance doors with fanlight to the first-floor hall are deeply recessed from the wall plane. A deeply recessed entrance to the second floor is identical to the first. A rectangular-shaped opening with a flat arch and keystone is centered above on the second floor. A rectangular-shaped vent is in the gable. Cornice returns and stuccoed gables are also evident on the main block.

The rear (east) elevation is the most complex of the elevations. It mirrors the front in regards to the central block with telescoping wings. The rear elevation of each wing is identical, containing a tall round arch window with keystones and springers marking the rear of the stairwells in each end bay. The next bay is marked by a double-hung window on both the first and second floor; the first floor is differentiated

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by a flat-brick arch and keystone. A small window on the first floor indicates the location of the bathroom. The remaining four bays on each wing are double-hung windows; the first floor having flat arches and keystones. The rear elevation of the main block has one window on the first floor on either side of the rear projecting auditorium wing, and a set of four windows on either end of the second floor. The window at the south end has been converted for handicapped access and contains a modern door and handicap ramp. Two shed roof vent dormers pierce the roofline in addition to an interior brick chimney.

The flat roof auditorium projects east from the rear of the main block of the school. The north and south elevations contain six bays of windows and one door. The double-leaf exit door is surmounted by a fanlight with keystones. All of the windows are capped by flat arches with keystones. A cast stone belt course is evident near the top of the elevation. Perpendicularly placed at the east end of the auditorium is a low 1960's brick addition built to house the home economics and agriculture classrooms but now containing the cafeteria and classrooms. It is a modern addition with a flat roof, banks of windows on its north and east elevations, and little if any ornamentation.

**Interior:**

The front entrance to Sunbury High School opens into a wide entrance hall. The principal's office and a large supply closet are on the south side of the hall while the nurse's office is on the north side. A large arch marks the entrance to the cross hall which runs north/south the length of the building. Across the hall is an arched niche flanked by two broad elliptical arched openings containing the stairs with simple iron balustrades that lead from the arched openings up to two sets of double doors to the school's auditorium. The auditorium is a large room with three sections of seats facing the stage at the east end of the room. The stage has a tongue-and-groove apron. Auditorium walls are plaster with tongue-and-groove wainscot and chair rail. There are still some original lights hanging from the acoustical tile ceiling. The floors slope down from west to east towards the stage, which is flanked by a two-panel door on either side that leads behind the stage. The Art Deco-style seats were moved from Norfolk, Virginia's Melrose Theater in 1974.

The classroom addition is accessed by a small hall located on the northeastern corner of the auditorium building behind the stage. A hall located on the west side of the building connects two classrooms to the cafeteria and to two entrances; one in the auditorium and the main exterior entrance on the west side of the building. The cafeteria is at the south end of the building and was probably added to the classroom building after the school became an elementary school in the 1960s. The kitchen and dishwashing areas are along the south wall. The remaining area is a large open room used for the cafeteria dining room. Several large holes have penetrated the flat roof of this building. The east wall is comprised of horizontal-light windows and the remaining walls are concrete block. The classroom and hallway doors have transoms above. There are two classrooms immediately north of the cafeteria accessed by the common hall. The middle classroom has windows on the east wall as well as windows and a door that open into the cafeteria indicating that the cafeteria may have been added later. The northernmost classroom has

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windows on the east, north, and west walls and an exit to the outside on the east wall. There are bathrooms located near this classroom and accessed from the hall. The main entrance to the addition is located in the hall between the cafeteria and the north classroom. It is composed of a pair of full-glazed doors a mid-century glass surrounded.

The first-floor hall leads to exterior entrances and stair halls on both the north and south ends of the building. There are eight classrooms on the first floor. Chalkboards are evident in most of the classrooms. The hall and classrooms have wood floors, plaster walls, and high ceilings. Transoms are located over the half-glazed wood classroom doors. Most of the classrooms have two-part partition walls that can be lifted into the wall above to enlarge the classroom. Built-in closets and bookcases flank many of the partition walls. A bathroom is located near the stairhalls at either end of the hall; one is for boys and the other for girls. The bathrooms maintain original tile wainscot and some fixtures. The stairs are open to the outdoors, but recessed within the main school building.

The second floor is very similar to the first in regard to the room arrangement, but with another classroom in place of a foyer. The second-floor layout has eight classrooms which are identical to those on the first floor. The last room on the northwest end of the building was the library. Originally, it was the last two rooms, but a partition wall now separates the rooms. A double-leaf, two-panel door marks the original entrance. Both rooms have bead-board backed bookcases and the last room on the hall contains a windowed partition wall. Near the center of the east side of the building is a small set of steps that leads up to a half-story. There are two classrooms in this area; one on either side of the steps. Each classroom is the same as those on the other floors but without the moveable partition walls. Chalk boards are on the west walls and windows are on the east walls. Both rooms are finished with plaster walls and ceilings and hardwood floors, although modern paneling has been applied to some of the plaster walls.

**Teacherage, circa 1940, Contributing building.**

Located north of the school, the teacherage is a two-story, side-gable frame, Colonial Revival-style house. The five-bay main block is flanked by one-story, one-bay, side-gable wings. A gabled portico marks the central entrance containing a five-panel door with sidelights. The windows are 9/9 double-hung sash with one exception, the window over the entrance is a 6/6 double-hung wood sash. The house has been sheathed with vinyl. A brick chimney rises from the south side of the house. The south elevation of the teacherage reveals an open one-story side-gable porch supported by four Doric columns. The first floor has a full-glazed door and two window openings. The second floor has two small window openings that narrowly flank the roof of the porch and two 9/9 double-hung windows near the ends of the elevation. Rectangular-shaped vents are in both the house and porch gables. Projecting from the rear of the house is a one-story, rear gabled ell. The south elevation displays a single window and paired windows, all double-hung 6/6 wood sash. The roof is standing seam metal. Another rear addition projects from the rear ell, this smaller wing has a half-glazed door and window and has a side-gable roof and shed roof porch that has been enclosed. The rear (east) elevation of the main block has a single and paired double-hung



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9/9 windows on the first floor and 9/9, 9/6, and 6/6 double-hung wood sash windows on the second floor. The rear elevation of the ell has a pair of 6/6 double-hung wood sash and a single, 9/9 double-hung wood sash window. The rear elevation of the north end of the main block has a half-glazed door with three cross panels. There are two, 9/9 double-hung windows on the first floor, and two 6/6 double-hung wood sash windows on the north elevation of the teacherage. Rectangular-shaped vents are located in both of the gables of this elevation. The north elevation of the rear ell has a 6/6 window closest to the house, a low, six-panel wood door that leads to a sublevel boiler room, and a 9/9 double-hung window. The addition at the east end of the ell has only one 9/9 window on this elevation. A tall, brick chimney with corbelled cap also projects from the roof of the rear ell on the north elevation.

The interior of the teacherage appears to be mostly intact and in keeping with a World War II era Colonial Revival-style home. A center hall with straight run of stairs along the east wall welcomes the visitor from the front door. Four rooms make up the main block on the first and second floor. A parlor is found south of the hall and has a fireplace and French door leading to the side porch. On the back (east) wall of this room is a pair of French doors that leads to the dining room. Built-in cabinets adorn the dining room as does an arched cased opening to the rear hall behind the stair. The dining room is connected to the kitchen in the rear ell of the house. Beyond the kitchen is the second addition which includes the enclosed porch as evidenced by exposed weatherboard. Two doors lead to a single room separate from the rest of the house off of the enclosed porch. On the north side of the center hall is a parlor with access to the small wing north of the main block. A second hall runs north to south behind this parlor to the center hall. A large utility room is east of the second hall and leads to the rear exterior of the house. A bathroom is located at the rear of the center hall.

The stair leading to the second floor has an intact newel and rail. The three-part newel post and the base and second-floor landing of the stair are square with reeding just under square molded caps. Simple square balusters, two per step, and a rounded handrail complete the balustrade. The hall above the stair has been paneled inside the balustrade from floor to ceiling. The paneling can be removed to expose the original intent of the open hallway. There are four bedrooms and a bathroom at the top of the stair. The bedrooms on the south side of the hall are marked by round arched cased openings and small vestibules between the hall and the doors. The northwest corner bedroom has a closet on the east wall. The attic over the north wing is accessed from inside this closet.

**Agricultural Building, circa 1908, 1937, Contributing building.**

The Agricultural Building predates the main school building and is located north of the teacherage. According to local accounts this building was originally sited northeast of the location of the present school. It was moved to its current location approximately 200 feet northwest towards the road when the current school was built. It is a one-story, six-bay, "T-shaped" building. The building maintains its original windows but has been sheathed in vinyl siding and has a standing seam metal roof. The original windows are large pane, 6/6 double-hung wood sash windows with wide molded surrounds. The entrance

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block is composed of a central six-panel door flanked by two windows. The ell has three windows grouped together near the north end of the building. A small wood stair has been built to reach the front door.

There is no fenestration on the south elevation. The rear (east) elevation of the main block is accessed by a modern wood handicapped ramp. The fenestration includes two windows and a replacement door in the gable area as well as a brick chimney flue. Two windows are also on the ell portion near the north end of the building. There are no windows or doors on the north elevation. The building's interior was not accessible, but by looking in the windows, hardwood floors, baseboards and some beadboard was seen. It is not known what alterations have been made to the floorplan.

**Gymnasium, circa 1950, Contributing building.**

The gymnasium, located south of the school, is a two-story, three-bay, gable-front, brick main block with flanking two-bay, flat-roof wings. The central gable main block contains three pairs of metal doors with blocked transoms. The center door is adorned by a simple classical pediment, entablature, and pilaster treatment. Flat-roof canopies mark the flanking entrances. Three horizontal-light awning windows are in the gable. The flat-roof wings project in front of the main block, contain two, horizontal light windows, and are adorned by brick quoins. A window air condition is in one of the windows on the north wing. A replacement garage door is centrally located on the south elevation. Also evident are two horizontal light windows on either end of the elevation in addition to four small window openings near the top of the building. Six, metal awning clerestory windows from the gymnasium are also visible beyond the flat roof wing on this elevation. The rear elevation is similar to the front with a few additions. There are three paired entrance doors like the front on the main block but there is a single two-horizontal-light window between each of the doors. Three windows in the gable match those on the front. There are two, horizontal-light windows on the south wing. The north wing has two small vertical windows with 1/1 configuration but one has been boarded over and a horizontal light window opening that has also been boarded over. The north elevation is the most complex with eight bays. There is a pair of metal doors with blocked transom, a window opening with air conditioning unit, a four-horizontal-light window, a pair of metal doors with transom intact, a three-columned bank of four-horizontal-light windows, a single door with transom, a four-horizontal-light window elevated near the cornice, and a single metal door.

The interior of the gymnasium is fairly straightforward. The main block is the gymnasium containing one large room open to two stories. The walls are concrete block; the floor is concrete around the perimeter and hardwood in the center for basketball. The ceiling is exposed metal truss. There are dressing rooms, closets, and shower rooms on the south side. The north side contains administrative offices, storage, and bathrooms.

**Shed, circa 2000, Noncontributing building.**

One-story, one-bay, gable-front, metal shed located northeast of the teacherage.

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**Pump-House/Oil House, circa 1941, Contributing building.**

Located north of teacherage, this one-story, one-bay, hip-roof, brick building has a single door and one window opening on the west elevation. The south elevation has a wall penetration that leads to the oil tank extending west from the building. The large tank is elevated on concrete blocks.

**Shed, circa 2000, Noncontributing building.**

One-story, gable-front, metal shed located east of the gymnasium.

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Summary:**

The 1937 Sunbury High School meets the National Register of Historic Places Criterion A for its association with the history of education in Gates County, North Carolina from 1908 to 1959. Sunbury High School also meets National Register Criterion C for architecture. The main school building and teacherage are excellent local examples of the Colonial Revival-style of architecture popular during the first half of the twentieth century. The Period of Significance for the school is 1908 to 1959, encompassing the original construction of the agricultural building, a building that predates the current school, the construction of the extant Sunbury High School, and additional buildings that contribute to the significance of the Sunbury High School campus. The school campus is the only one in Sunbury that retains both a school building and its associated buildings with a high degree of integrity. These support buildings include a gymnasium, teacherage, and agriculture building.

The 1908 agriculture building meets Criteria Consideration B, as a building removed from its original location, since it is the only surviving building significant for its association with education from 1908 to 1937 in Sunbury. In 1937, it was moved approximately 200 feet northwest from its original location, which was behind the current location of the teacherage. After 1937, it continued to function as an integral part of the Sunbury High School campus. It has not lost its integrity of association, setting, or post-1937 location because of the move and therefore meets the requirements. Although Sunbury High School continued to function as a school until 1997, the post-1959 use is not of exceptional significance and does not meet the requirements for Criteria Consideration G.

**Education Context and Historical Background:**

Gates County is and has always been primarily a rural county. The majority of the population is located within small communities that are dispersed throughout the county. Geographically the county is also

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remote. It, along with five other counties, occupies an area known as the northern Albemarle Region. South of the Virginia border, these counties are separated from the rest of the state by the Chowan River to the west and the Albemarle Sound to the south. Gates County is also bordered by the Great Dismal Swamp on the east side which further limits its access. The geographical limitations have contributed to the limited population. Today, Gates County is still mostly rural, sparsely populated, and dominated by agriculture.

Gates County, like many rural counties in North Carolina, offered limited educational opportunities for its children before the mid-nineteenth century. Before the Civil War, education was generally provided within the home. Sometimes parents would hire tutors and in some cases a private school was constructed. The Piney Grove community (now Reynoldson) erected one of these schools between 1801 and 1810 (Butchko, p. 18). The establishment of Piney Grove School was followed by the opening of several more private academies over the next fifty years including: Spring Hill Academy in Sarem (1820), Sunbury Academy in Sunbury (1832), Gatesville Academy in Gatesville (1832), Riddicksville Academy near Sunbury (1842), Female Institute at Buckland (ca. 1850), and Female Seminary at Sunbury (1852) (Butchko, p. 18). In 1851, the Reynoldson Academy was established to prepare young men for entrance into Wake Forest College in Wake County (Butchko, p. 18).

The post Civil War era was a period of reconstruction in the South. Education in Gates County and elsewhere focused on merging the schools into a consolidated system. Eighteen public schools, three private schools, and one academy were open in Gates County and doing well by 1873 (Butchko, p. 41). Public school funding gradually increased and by the turn of the twentieth century the public schools counted thirty-two schools for whites and twenty-nine schools for blacks in Gates County (Butchko, p. 41).

Public schools continued to grow in Gates County during the first half of the twentieth century. Governor Charles Aycock supported many improvements to the educational system in North Carolina during his tenure as Governor between 1901 and 1905. He promoted and passed a program known as "equalization" whereby financial resources were distributed across the state so that poorer counties could have similar advantages as wealthier counties in the area of education (Powell, p. 446). Construction increased as sixteen schools were built between 1901 and 1911. Although most of these were for white children, including five high schools, at least two were for black children (Butchko, p. 41). In the 1920s, the Rosenwald Fund assisted with the construction of schools for African American children. Two such schools were built in Gates County; in 1925 Corapeake in Holly Grove Township, and in 1927, Reid's Grove in Gatesville (Butchko, p. 41). Built by the standards set forth by the Rosenwald Foundation, these large frame schools were substantially finer buildings than any of the earlier frame school buildings constructed for African Americans in the county.

At Sunbury, a small community in the eastern part of the county, education has been a part of the community since the Sunbury Academy was established in the area in 1832 (Harrell, p. 14). The original

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Academy was only open for seven years and was open to boys and girls (Harrell, p. 14). In 1852, a female seminary was also founded at Sunbury by James Coston (Gatling, p. 3). Simultaneously, there was a boy's school nearby operated by Mr. Gordan in his home (Harrell, p. 15). On July 6, 1885, the Gates County Board of Education was officially formed (Gatling, p. 26). There is limited information on education within Gates County or Sunbury between the Civil War and the beginning of the twentieth century.

After the turn of the twentieth century, the county continued to strive to meet the educational needs of the community's children. In 1906 property was purchased at Sunbury for public school purposes and in 1908 a schoolhouse was built at Sunbury (Costen, p. 43). A photograph of the school is in the 1912 Annual Report by the County Superintendent of Schools and shows a one-story, "T-shaped", frame structure with steep gables, large windows, and wide, shed-roof porches. A belfry surmounts the roof of one of the porches. According to local tradition the agricultural building was also built during this 1908 period of development sited at a different location on the school yard than its current one.

Agriculture became a required part of the elementary curriculum in 1909 (Trussell, p. 23). The elementary course of study was a seven year program and high school was grades eight through eleven. A documentary photograph, found in Thomas Butchko's book Forgotten Gates and dated 1923, illustrates a two-story, frame school and an earlier one-room school. The two-story building was called the Sunbury Consolidated School. The school pictured appears to have the same plan as the 1908 school but with two stories and no belfry. A second photograph on the same page, also dated 1923, illustrates the imposing two-story brick Neoclassical Revival Sunbury High School which replaced the Sunbury Consolidated School, dating the building to 1908 (Butchko, p. 60). However, records indicate that this brick school was probably built in 1924. In 1922 a report by the County Superintendent stated that a \$20,000 loan application had been submitted to the Special Building Fund for a new consolidated Sunbury School (Trussell, p. 48). Additional correspondence is found in the State Records of Public Instruction between John J. Blair, State Director of School Planning, and Gates County Superintendent J.M. Glenn. Within this correspondence is a letter dated January 3, 1923 from Mr. Glenn stating that the district has approximately \$45,000 to build a building at Sunbury and that they want a building with eleven class rooms, a library, and auditorium. In the same letter he mentions that he has spoken with a Mr. Linthicum about another building. H.C. Linthicum is an architect who practiced in Durham, North Carolina from the last decade of the nineteenth century into the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The brick Neoclassical Revival school was on site and served as the high school until 1937 when the present Sunbury High School was built. It seems unusual to replace a brick school that is only thirteen years old but a letter dated, September 25, 1936 from W.F. Credle, State Director of Schoolhouse Planning, to Gates County Superintendent Henry Overman reports that he along with architect W.H. Dietrick and contractor A. J. Fox toured the ca. 1924 Sunbury High School and found that it was in a state of disrepair. He stated that the parapet wall was a "menace", the arch over the auditorium stage was in danger of collapse, the roof was not trussed appropriately, and that in general the framing was not braced properly (State Records). He hesitated to do so but recommended that the school be abandoned and a new

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plant constructed. This finding is further substantiated by “A Report by the State Education Commission of North Carolina” that reported in 1921 that the large brick school buildings were built inexpensively, sacrificing quality, and making compromises to ensure an auditorium could be constructed.

On May 24, 1937, Gates County Superintendent Overman sent a letter to Mr. Credle seeking a list of architects. He mentioned that a recent election in Gates County authorized the issuance of bonds not to exceed \$45,000.00 for the new school at Sunbury. The school was open by 1938 because the Public Schools at Gates County sued the Virginia Electric and Power Company in 1938 for overcharging for electricity at the new school at Sunbury (State Records). The building served grades one through eleven until the early 1940s when twelfth grade was added in all North Carolina schools (Virginia Pilot). The agriculture building was moved from its site northeast of the new school approximately 200 feet to north of the school closer to the road but continued to serve as the agriculture building. The agriculture building continued to be used as part of the school campus throughout its history as supplemental classroom space for the school. The county has leased the building for several years but retains ownership.

In the 1940 Operation of Plant and Sanitation Survey conducted by the State School Commission and State Board of Health, Principal B. L. White reported that there were three buildings on the campus; the main building, an agricultural shop, and an agricultural classroom. The teacherage was under construction during the report according to White. The teacherage was an important part of school life during the time and one had always been part of the Sunbury campus. The original teacherage was located south of the present school. It had electricity, water, and cost only \$14 per month to rent, whereas somewhere else it probably would have been \$30 per month for boarding (Trussell, p. 92). This building burned after the ca. 1924 Sunbury High School was closed (Lane Interview). Teacherages were built by the county to provide secure housing at affordable rates for the teachers who were usually single women. During the consolidation era it was the intent of the county to build a teacherage at every school (Trussell, p. 92). The current teacherage building was built during 1940 and is located on the opposite side of the school from the original teacherage. The use of teacherages fell out of favor in the 1950s and early 1960s as teachers began to seek more independence. The Sunbury High School teacherage was most recently leased to one of the local churches for use as a parsonage.

The Operation of Plant and Sanitation Survey required a drawing of the school layout. The configuration is the same as it is today except instead of a cafeteria building behind the school there were two freestanding agricultural buildings. The extant 1908 agricultural building has been moved approximately 200 feet northwest to be closer to Highway 32. No cafeteria or gymnasium appears in the 1940 layout. The survey showed the property where the gymnasium now stands as church property. A bond was passed to build the new gymnasium, which was completed in the winter of 1950-1951 (Lane Interview). The need for a gymnasium coincides with an increased demand for physical education as part of the curriculum during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1944 and 1945 health courses began to be offered to those in the twelfth grade (Prince, p. 449). By 1954 thirty minutes a day of physical education was required in grades one through eight and three periods a week for ninth graders (Prince, p. 452). The

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gymnasium also served as a cafeteria for many years (Lane Interview). Again, as the curriculum changed and expanded so did the need for more and different types of spaces at Sunbury High School. In 1960, the new home economics and agriculture building was added to the back of the auditorium to allow for vocational training.

The last graduating class at Sunbury High School was in 1962 when Gates County High School opened and served the ninth through twelfth grades. Sunbury High School became an elementary school serving grades one through eight until the late 1960s. The agricultural classroom in the addition to the rear of the main building was renovated during this period to become a cafeteria and the other two classrooms became kindergarten rooms (Lane Interview). Sunbury High School was used as an elementary school from 1962 until it closed in 1997. Gates County still owns the school, the gymnasium, the teacherage, and the agricultural building. The school has remained vacant since 1997 and was damaged during hurricane Isabel in 2003.

**Architecture Context:**

By the end of the 1920s the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction had fourteen divisions to supervise all aspects of the school system, including Schoolhouse Planning, supervised by John Blair. In a 1923 report entitled Schoolhouse Planning in North Carolina Blair noted that schools should be built to evoke a sense of pride within their community (Unknown Author, p. 12). Schools were to be planned on large tracts of land (between six and twelve acres) with landscaping and preferably sited on highway frontage (Unknown author, p. 15). Blair stated, "thus serving by their attractive appearance and design, as an asset to the State and the county and giving to the schoolhouse the prominence and publicity its importance deserves." The schools were also to be built of brick, stone, and concrete and fully equipped with steam heat, indoor plumbing, and an auditorium (Unknown author, 15). The auditorium was an important feature because it could serve the community as a meeting place as well as for school programming. The Department also recommended that at least fifty percent of the school's square footage should be used for instruction (Unknown author, p. 13).

Sunbury High School is an example of a school building dating from the 1930s that maintains many principles from the planning of the 1920s. The building is centrally located within the Sunbury Township on the north side of Highway 32 as recommended by the Department of Public Instruction. Situated on a large wooded lot, the school is set back with a commanding presence on the highway. The two-story brick structure is simply detailed with minimal stone and patterned brick embellishment. The interior of Sunbury High School is also an example of the prototype consolidated school; it has fourteen classrooms that can be combined into seven or partitioned depending on necessity. The only spaces not used for instruction were the halls, restrooms, office, stairhalls, and auditorium. Interior finishes are also intact at Sunbury High School including tongue-and-groove wood floors, plaster walls, half-glazed doors with transoms, and the original auditorium. The only alteration to the building is the construction of a 1960s-era classroom addition to the rear of the auditorium.

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Several schools were built during the 1920s consolidation era in Gates County. There are at least a dozen frame school buildings that survive in Gates County. These are all in various states of renovation or disrepair. Many have been adaptively reused and converted into private residences. Some are deteriorated and others are being used for storage. The common denominator for all of these schools is that they are all small, frame, schools. Three brick consolidation white high schools were constructed at Gates, Hobbsville, and Eure during the consolidation era of the 1920s. In his 1991 publication, Tom Butchko reported that all three were in various states of disrepair or dismantling and therefore focused the architectural survey on the frame schools in the county (Butchko, 56). Only one extant wall remains from Hobbsville High School and Eure High School was torn down and has been replaced by a house (Lane Interview). A consolidation school was also built in Gatesville during the first half of the twentieth century, however, this school was razed in the early 1960s when the present high school was built (Lane Interview). Gates High School is extant, and is a brick, one-story, U-shaped building. A letter dated March 26, 1924 from the Gates County Superintendent to the State Superintendent states that the county is planning on building a school at Gates and has \$30,000 to buy the land and build and equip the school. He requests a copy of the "Bonitz building with the terra cotta and other non-essentials eliminated (State Records)." The agricultural building is also extant at Gates High School. Gates High School closed in 1956 and was sold. It was adapted in 1975 for use as a farm supplies warehouse. The agriculture building is being used by the local community as a center. Gates and Sunbury high schools are the only brick twentieth century schools that remain as reminders of this chapter in Gates County history.

The Colonial Revival style was popular in the United States during the first half of the mid-twentieth century. It came into favor with the return of classicism popularized by the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. In North Carolina the Colonial Revival style influenced all building forms, residential, religious, institutional, and educational. Many Colonial Revival style residences dot the landscape and are found in number in towns like Gatesville along Main Street (Bishir, p. 119). One of the most impressive is in Sunbury across the street from the school site. It is the circa 1933-34, C.C. Edwards House, brick foursquare with impressive tile hipped roof with dormers, porte cochere, wide porch with brick balustrade and paired windows. The main school building on the Sunbury High School campus is a fine example of Colonial Revival-style school architecture. The symmetrical almost residential form and details, including the beltcourse, multi-pane windows, entry surround, and keystones, focus the attention on the stature of the building and reflects its importance in the community. Another good example of the Colonial Revival style in Sunbury is the ca. 1940 Teacherage at Sunbury High School. This large residence features a gabled entry portico, entry surround with sidelights, an open one-story side-gable porch supported by four Doric columns, and an off-center end chimney with gently sloping shoulders.



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**Boundary Description and Justification**

Boundary Description: The boundary that encompasses the Sunbury High School and contributing buildings associated with the property for the purpose of this nomination includes approximately 7 +/- acres identified by a heavy black line the attached map at a one inch equals 200 feet scale.

Boundary Justification: The boundary described above is a portion of the land historically associated with the 1937 Sunbury High School, 1908 Agricultural Building, ca. 1940 Teacherage, and ca. 1950 Gymnasium and provides an appropriate setting.

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**Photographs**

The following information pertains to all photographs for the Sunbury High School,  
Highway 32, Gates County, NC

Photographer: Michelle A. Michael

Date: August 2006 and 2008

Location of Negatives: North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC

1. View of façade (west) of Sunbury High School.
2. View of south (side) elevation.
3. View of east (rear) elevation and auditorium wing looking northwest.
4. View of east (rear) elevation and auditorium wing looking southwest.
5. View of east (rear) elevation with cafeteria wing.
6. View of north (side) elevation.
7. Interior view of auditorium entrance.
8. Interior view of library.
9. Interior view of classroom.
10. Interior view of auditorium stage.
11. View of stair.
12. View of Gymnasium (2008)
13. View of Teacherage (2008)
14. View of Agricultural Building (2008)
15. View of Agricultural Building, Teacherage and Sunbury High School. (2008)

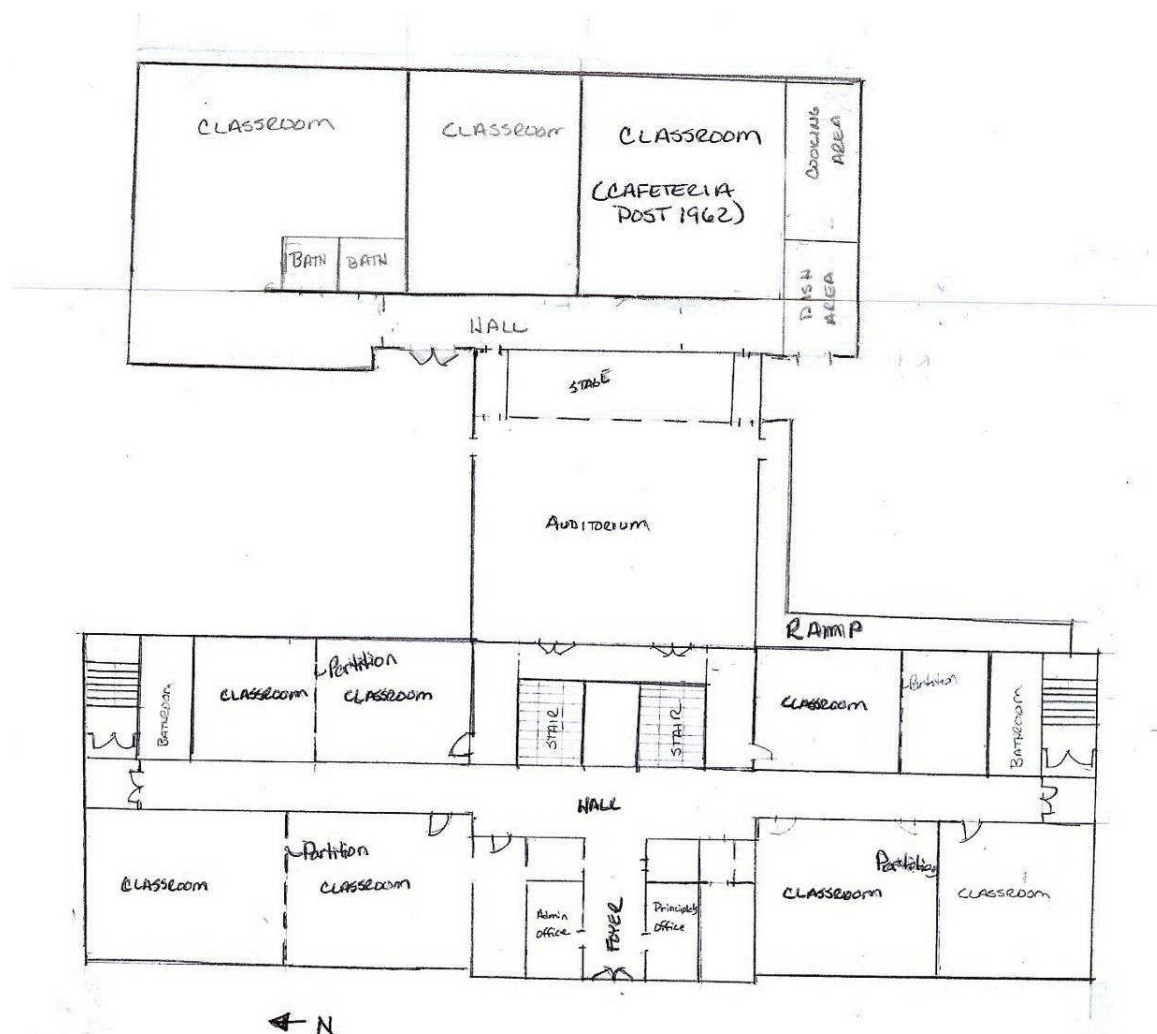
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Floor plans – Not to Scale.



First Floor

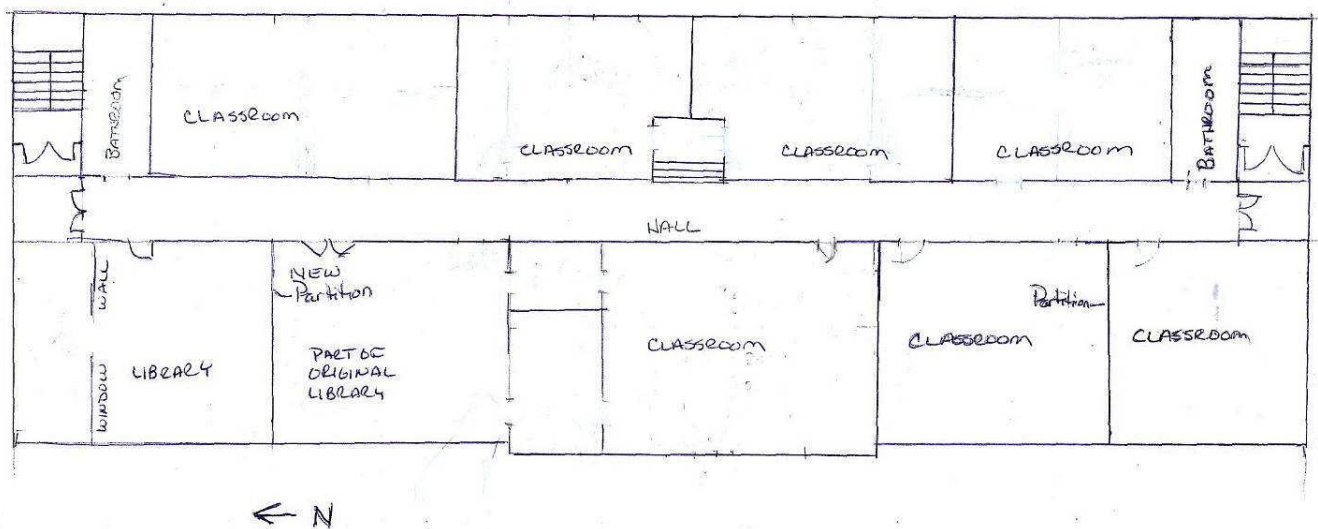
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Floor Plans – Not to Scale



Second Floor